

# Lisping

## What is a Lisp?

There are different types of lisps, but typically a lisp is when the tongue comes out between the teeth, or touches the teeth while saying the S or Z sounds. The S and Z sounds like a TH sound when this occurs.

Developmentally, children may have a variant of a lisp until the age of 4 ½, by which time 75% of Australian children develop a correct S sound.

Sometimes, this pattern of tongue protrusion affects other sounds, such as SH, CH and J.

## Why do children have a lisp?

Until the age of 4 ½, children may have a way of saying the S or Z sounds with the tongue showing on or between the teeth.

If this persists, it may be a sign of difficulty saying these sounds, or they may be in the habit of saying them this way.

Sometimes it is regarded as cute so that attention is not drawn to it until the child is older. By then, it is more difficult for the child to change the way they say these sounds. It may not be noticed or regarded as a concern.

Occasionally, a child has a lateral lisp, which sounds slushy. Air comes out over the sides of the tongue. They are unlikely to grow out of this type of lisp.

In some children, many sounds seem to have tongue protrusion, which may be a sign of a blocked nose, adenoids, allergy, infection, mouth breathing or a craniofacial abnormality.

## What can I do about the lisp?

Observe your child saying the S sound.

- Are their teeth together?
- Is the tongue showing?
- Does it sound slushy?
- The lisp may not affect the people's ability to understand the child.

A speech pathologist should assess if:

- The child has a lisp and is 4 ½ or older
- The child sounds slushy. These children can be assessed at an even earlier age.

### How can I teach the correct sound?

- Have your child look in the mirror
- Show them how to say S
- Keep the teeth together
- Keep the tongue behind the teeth
- Smile while making the S sound
- Make it a fun game
- Later, try saying words that start with S (eg. sun, sit, see)
- Find pictures of S words and use these to play games such as hide and seek, board games, snap etc
- A Speech Pathologist may assess your child and recommend a Home Program

Treated at an early age, a lisp may be easily overcome and prevent teasing later on.

If you would like more information or continue to be concerned about your child's progress, then contact your local Speech Pathologist

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